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THE HOLY WAR

By KATHARINE TYNAN



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DEDICATION

*These to the mourners of the War,
Saints of the great days, still and calm,
Who carry affliction like a star,
Who for your wounds have found a balm.*

*Who all so sweetly comfort take,
Who have no plaint for wound or stripe,
Who in the arid day will slake
Your thirst at a small conduit pipe.*

*Who praise your God although He slay,
Who are uplifted from the deep.
We know you in a murky day
By the sad glorious air you keep.*

*Your tears are only for God's eyes,
Your cries are for the heart of God.
What strange foretaste of Paradise
Tells secrets as you walk abroad!*

*For you, for you, unknown and dear,
My bundle of woundwort's plucked again
In this most glorious day and year
That gives your man to die for men.*

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THE VISION

AN average man was Private Flynn,
Good stuff for soldiering, no doubt ;
Troublesome when the drink was in,
A quiet lad when it was out.

Too fond of gaming and the girls,
And given to "language" that would fright
His mother dreaming of his curls
And his soft boyish ways at night.

He had forgotten how to pray
The way she taught him at her knees.
Her prayers ran like a river all day,
And while she slept gave little ease.

The Calvary, by Souchez, holds
Wide arms to clasp the new-made beds,
Where lie, nor toss their browns and golds,
The precious, the beloved heads.

Flynn's Captain, who had proved a friend
At times a friend is needed most,
Slept there, and comfort was at end
Because Flynn's faithful friend was lost.

"Gassed." O'er that twisted grace and dumb,
Flynn swore a choking oath to give
No quarter when the day should come
And fed his hate to thrive and live.

Lest that his Captain feel forgot,
At night when all the trenches slept,
Flynn tended like a garden plot
The grave o'er which the night-dews wept.

He raised a little cross of sticks,
Pansies, forget-me-nots, amid;
Over him the gaunt Crucifix
Shed comfort—or he thought it did.

Rank disobedience! No one knew
How Flynn, so devil-may-care and brave,
Courtied destruction just to do
A little gardening on a grave.

One night the shells lit all the dark,
 Burst in a million splinters of flame ;
At morn, before the singing lark,
 Flynn to his tender office came.

He smoothed the clay where it was rough,
 With his hard tender hand he drew
As 'twere a quilt of silken stuff
 Between the sleeper and the dew.

All done, he stretched his six foot four,
 And yawning, in the dawn's pale glow,
Bent to the Crucifix once more,
 Saluted ere he turned to go.

Then here's the marvel—the dead Christ
 Opened His Eyes, the very Eyes
That Mary loved, which through a mist
 The saved souls see in Paradise.

Flynn, like Elijah, caught to Heaven !
 Plain Private Flynn—saw God revealed !
Unto a simple soldier given
 The secret heart of Heaven unsealed.

Could he go back to common joys
After the joys of Heaven were won ?
The quietness was rent with noise,
The death sprang from the hidden gun.

They shot Flynn's eyes out. That was good.
Eyes that saw God are better blind.
Flynn muses on beatitude,
His empty eye-sockets behind.

In a bare London hospital ward
He smiles and prays the live-long day.
He who has seen the living Lord
Has Light upon the darkest way.

THE WALL BETWEEN

THE wall between is grown so thin
That whoso peers may see
A flutter of rose, a living green
Like new leaves on a tree.

The wall's now gotten many a chink
Where whoso leans may hear
The feet of them who pass to drink
All at a well clear.

The people go, the people flow
T'other side o' the wall
With silken rustle and laughter low
As to a festival.

Come mother and wife and piteous bride,
The wall's nigh broken through;
And there be some the other side
That peep and pry for you.

So thin has grown, like a precious stone,
The wall no eye might pass,
You may have vision of your own
As through a crystal glass.

And if that sight should you delight
Your tears will all be dried,
For souls so bright that walk in white
Dear bliss on the other side.

TO THE OTHERS

THIS was the gleam then that lured from far
Your son and my son to the Holy War :
Your son and my son for the accolade
With the banner of Christ over them, in steel arrayed.

All quiet roads of life ran on to this
When they were little for their mother's kiss ;
Little feet hastening, so soft, unworn,
To the vows and the vigil and the road of thorn.

Your son and my son, the downy things,
Sheltered in mother's breast, by mother's wings,
Should they be broken in the Lord's wars—Peace !
He who has given them are they not His ?

Dreams of knight's armour and the battle shout,
Fighting and falling at the last redoubt ;
Dreams of long dying on the field of slain :
This was the dream that lured, nor lured in vain.

These were the Voices they heard from far,
Bugles and trumpets of the Holy War;
Your son and my son have heard the call,
Your son and my son have stormed the wall.

Your son and my son, clean as new swords,
Your man and my man and now the Lord's!
Your son and my son for the Great Crusade,
With the banner of Christ over them—our knights, new-
made.

THEY WHO RETURN

To Mrs. Weigall

INTO the stricken house who steals on quiet feet
And sudden brings the sunshine it used to wear ?
Whose is the tender whisper that turns the bitter sweet ?
Whose kiss is on your forehead, whose breath in your
hair ?

Who sits down beside you in the firelight glow ?
Who leans on your shoulder like the boy of old ?
Whose is the arm about you that you used to know,
Drawing the sting from your wound, your heart from
cold ?

Like the rustle of dead leaves in the autumn gloam
Running like little feet on a wind-swept road,
They are coming home so sweetly all the roads of home,
Very flesh of your flesh who belong to God.

The horse in the stable whinnies by the door,
The dog of a sudden is wild with delight.
Who is this he welcomes, long waited for ?
Who smiles in the shadow, so dear, so bright ?

Mercy of God, they are given, not taken away !
There's a face in the doorway, a foot on the floor.
They sit down beside us in the shadows grey,
Lay their heads on our breasts as oft before.

THE HEART OF A BOY

To Mrs. Guy Wyndham

THE heart of a boy is full of light,
Naked of self, quite pure and clean,
No shadows lurk in it : it is bright
Where God Himself hath been.

I looked in a boy's heart and saw
How its desire was white desire,
Burning upward, as winds might draw
The flame of a candle higher.

What was the heart's desire that burned
Like a white candle stirred in a breeze ?
Power or glory or honour earned ?
Love that is more than these ?

The heart of a boy has but one goal.
The flying Danger smiles as she flies,
Makes her own of him, heart and soul,
With the lure of her lovely eyes.

The boy's heart now is set on a star,
A sword for the weak against the strong,
A young knight riding forth to the War
Who dies to right the wrong.

THE CONVENT GARDEN

THE Convent garden lies so near
The road the people go,
If it was quiet you might hear
The nuns' talk, merry and low.

Black London trees have made their screen
From folk who pry and peer,
The sooty sparrows now begin
Their talk of country cheer.

And round and round by twos and threes
The nuns walk, praying still
For fighting men across the seas
Who die to save them ill.

From the dear prison of her choice
The young nun's thoughts are far;
She muses on the golden boys
At all the Fronts of War.

Now from her narrow Convent house
She sees where great ships be,
And plucks the robe of God, her Spouse,
To give the victory.

Under her robe her heart's a-beat,
Her maiden pulses stir,
At sound of marching in the street,
To think they die for her !

And now beneath the veil and hood
Her hidden eyes will glow,
The battle ardour's in her blood—
If she might strike one blow !

And when she sleeps at last perchance
Her soul hath slipped away
To fields of Serbia and of France
Until the dawn of day.

She wanders by the still moonbeam
By dying and by dead,
And many a broken man will dream
An angel lifts his head.

All day and night as a sweet smoke
Her prayer ascends the skies
That all her piteous fighting folk
May walk in Paradise.

And still her innocent pulses stir,
Her heart is proud and high,
To think that men should die for her—
And the marching feet go by.

EMPTINESS

WHERE there is nothing God comes in :
The Very God has room enough
In the poor heart that's stripped so clean
Of earth and all the joys thereof.

I looked for shadow and the night
When Death had taken her Love away,
But for the darkness there was light,
And for the night clear floods of day.

Great light that filled it to the brim
And overflowed and spilt around,
Flowing from Him, pulsing from Him,
And all the heart was holy ground.

The earth, the heavens, cannot contain
Our God, nor any starry place ;
But He who takes delight with men
Bounds Him within a narrow space.

And where her poor heart bleeds and breaks
Because her dearest Love is dead,
The Lord of Life comes in and takes
Warm to His arms the piteous head.

THE BROKEN SOLDIER

To Earl Grey

THE broken soldier sings and whistles day to dark ;
He's but the remnant of a man, maimed and half-blind,
But the soul they could not harm goes singing like the
lark,
Like the incarnate Joy that will not be confined.

The Lady at the Hall has given him a light task,
He works in the gardens as busy as a bee ;
One hand is but a stump and his face a pitted mask ;
The gay soul goes singing like a bird set free.

Whistling and singing like a linnet on wings ;
The others stop to listen, leaning on the spade,
Whole men and comely, they fret at little things.
The soul of him's singing like a thrush in a glade.

Hither and thither, hopping, like Robin on the grass,
The soul in the broken man is beautiful and brave ;
And while he weeds the pansies and the bright hours pass
The bird caught in the cage whistles its joyous stave.

THE GARDENER

For Violet

IN the garden she hath found
Herb of grace and fever-few ;
Woundwort there doth much abound,
Heartsease too.

Where she laid dead things away
In the chilly earth, what stir !
Whisper of Spring-time, green and gay,
Comes to her.

All Sweet-Nancies, daffodils,
Talking in their beds below
Of sweet vales and shining hills
Whither they go.

In the garden there's no grief ;
God walks there and He is kind,
When the first dear crumpled leaf
Shakes in the wind.

There's no death now. Winter's done.
All's given back. The dead again
Walk with her in the wind and sun
And the sweet rain.

Heartsease in her garden plot,
Ladders-to-Heaven scale the skies;
While the dear forget-me-not
Brightens her eyes.

THE PERFECT PLAYMATE

*Roger Charles Noel Bellingham. Before Ypres,
March 4th, 1915*

THE Perfect Playmate, whither does he stray
That now no more his feet come up this way
That rang so blithe upon the nursery floor ?
Wild games and laughter ! Now the little son
Listens and longs, and his small world's undone.
The Perfect Playmate will return no more.

Who else made holidays of rainy days ?
Who told such marvels by the firelight blaze ?
King of misrule when Christmas frosts were hoar.
But now the black-gowned mother's tears will flow
Whether her little son be good or no.
The Perfect Playmate will return no more.

Who built the sands, dug deep, was never loth
Nor ever tired : was strong enough for both :

Home on his shoulders a small drowsy head bore ;
Was ever smiling. The boy keeps apart
A gay young smiling father in his heart.
The Perfect Playmate will return no more !

No more, no more ! Himself a boy he goes
Beyond the uttermost peaks, the eternal snows :
Light on his young brown head from an open door.
His youth unwithered, smiling all the way,
Into the land of youth, the Spring of Day.
The Perfect Playmate will return no more.

THE COMRADES

THE angels walk with men in the red ruin and rain,
White and gold, as of old, without spot or stain.
Our warriors fought and died, the white lords by theirside.
The angels walk with men.

God doth not forget in the battle, the retreat ;
The heart of Love's above the dying and the slain.
There's a ladder to the skies and, armed from Paradise,
The angels walk with men.

Foot-soldiers, cavaliers, the flame on their spears,
They sweep fast in haste o'er the bloody plain.
What ill shall betide us with the winged knights beside
us ?
The angels walk with men.

Golden-mailed, lance in arm, they ride on the storm—
Michael and a poor soldier are comrades twain !
Oh, in the noise of battle, the red roar and the rattle,
The angels walk with men !

THE WIDOW

WHEN she smiles her love draws nigh,
When she weeps he doth depart,
And returns to the Heavens high
With an unwounded heart.

God would suffer him no such wrong
As that he should see her tears
Lest his heart be sad among
His young joyous peers.

Therefore shall her tears be dried,
Therefore her poor lips will smile,
So her darling by her side
May sit down awhile.

So she bends her will to learn
Patience high and heavenly mirth,
That her soldier may return
To his own hearth.

STARLING

THE starling in the ivy now,
For to amuse his dear,
Mimics the dog, the cat, the cow,
Blackbird and Chanticleer.

The starling's an accomplished mime:
Between his love-making
He solaces her brooding-time
By many a madcap thing.

He is the saw, the spade, the scythe,
He rings the dinner bell;
Chuckles of laughter, small and blithe,
Of self-laudations tell.

Now by the battle-field he mocks
As though 'twere but a game,
Thunder with which the belfry rocks
And the great bursts of flame.

Till when the merriment will pall
He turns to love again,
Calling his love-sick gurgling call
Above the dying men.

Who knows what dream the starling weaves
Of boyhood, soft and clean ?
A small room under golden eaves
To which the sun looks in.

The starling's talking in the thatch,
Bidding the boy arise ;
And the door's opening on the latch
To show—his mother's eyes.

THE TRUST

To you, O Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux,
Fresh as a morning rose in morning dew,
 We give our men in keeping :
 Watch them waking, watch them sleeping.
Lest our hearts should break, O keep trust and be
 true !

The old saints are beset with many prayers ;
The knees of centuries have worn their stairs.
 But you, O little nun,
 Heaven's youngest, littlest one,
You are strong to lift our burdens and our cares.

Your childish hands have roses pink and pale
That climb the trellises of Heaven and trail.
 Shake your roses down before them,
 Your dear heart be sorry for them,
Keep them safe within the shadow of your veil.

You lift hands for France—O lift them heaven-high,
For those who fight with France, who bleed and die.

Pluck the robe of Heaven, O Dear,
So the Heart of Heaven may hear,
That never yet was hardened to your cry !

THE COLONISTS

To men now of her blood and race
England's a little garden place,
Dear as a woman is, and she
The Queen of every loyalty.

To dwellers 'mid the ice and snows,
She is their secret garden rose
From which that bee, their heart, sucks off
For the cold Winter honey enough.

To toilers 'mid the sultry plains,
Sick for her tempered suns and rains,
She is the thought that wets their eyes
And hearts with dew of Paradise.

Most loved of those who never knew
Her green o' the silk and her soft blue,
Her mild inviolate fields that be
Hedged with the sweet-briar of the sea.

Sweet in their dreams her Summers are,
Her tranquil nights of moon and star,
The love-songs of her nightingales;
A water-spring that never fails.

Amid their unending distances
Her little crowded sweetness is
A dream of rest, a dream of prayer,
With homes and children everywhere.

Touch her—and they are all on fire,
This little land of their desire
Seen in a mirage far away
With light upon her night and day.

SPEEDING

To Ivo Alan Charteris, October 17th, 1915

REQUIESCAT is not my bidding,
That is the weary man's right speeding ;
You, O Child, full of life and laughter,
Joy to you now and long days hereafter !

Light of foot, ever running and leaping,
Who would tether your feet to sleeping ?
Who would stretch you on a sad bed ?
A flying light was your golden head.

Many a game and a goal be given
To you in the playing-fields of Heaven ;
Be as you were, a light shape of joy,
Glad in the strength and the grace of a boy.

Dear and young, here's the prayer I pray for you ;
Heaven be full of new life and play for you !
Swift as an arrow, light as a swallow,
So may we find you, boy, when we follow.

HAYMAKING

In Connaught, 1915

AYE, sure, it does always be rainin'
An' the hay lyin' out in the wet,
But what's the good o' complainin' ?
It never made things better yet !
There'll be musty hay in the manger,
The cow's goin' dry, be mischance,
And the boy that went for a Ranger
Is lost on us—somewhere in France !

The father of him, it's heart-breakin'—
Wid a watery glint o' the sun,
It's out wid him, turnin' an' shakin'—
Then all the labour's undone.
There won't be much savin' in Connaught,
The winter'll be hungry and black,
But I wouldn't waste sorrow upon it
If only the boy could come back !

There's a terrible cloud over Nephin,
An' the rain rushin' up from the say,
Och, what if the hay is past savin' ?
I wouldn't be mindin' the hay.
'Tis the loss of the boy's bent me double,
An' the poor ould man is as bad ;
I'm starvin' for him, an' the trouble,
The trouble's heavy and sad.

God's good and He'll send better weather,
The sun'll be shinin' again,
If Pat and me was together
I wouldn't be mindin' the rain.
No matter what weather was in it
I wouldn't care if he'd come.
But the heart o' me's cryin' this minit,
For the boy that'll never come home !

THE TRUCE OF GOD

After Suvla

Now to the stricken doe
And the wounded hind
There comes the Mercy of God
That is cool and kind.

To the hapless creature He made
He giveth rest.
All the woes of the world
Lie on His breast.

The tender Physician giveth
The drug of sleep,
Lest that His dove, His daughter,
Awake and weep.

Beyond all dreams of delight
Is the quiet peace,
He carries His lamb in His arms,
The blood on her fleece.

HIGH SUMMER

PINKS and syringa in the garden closes
And the sweet privet hedge and golden roses.
The pines hot in the sun, the drone of the bee ;
They die in Flanders to keep these for me.

The long sunny days and the still weather,
The cuckoo and the blackbird shouting together,
The lambs calling their mothers out on the lea ;
They die in Flanders to keep these for me.

The doors and windows open : South wind blowing
Warm through the clean sweet rooms, on tip-toe going,
Where many sanctities, dear and delightful be—
They die in Flanders to keep these for me.

Daisies leaping in foam on the green grasses,
The dappled sky and the stream that sings as it passes—
These are bought with a price, a bitter fee—
They die in Flanders to keep these for me.

THE LAST PARTING

To Violet

HE is not dead. They do not know,
Who pity her, her secret ease,
How he is near her, how they go,
Her hand in his.

The last sad parting now is done.
She can look back as from afar
And pity her whose dearest one
Went to the War.

Now he is with her every day ;
There is no salt dividing sea.
She leans on him in the old way,
Her staff is he.

The folk as they come in and out
Wonder at her pale joy : the while
She in the lightest fear or doubt
Turns to his smile.

THE LONG VACATION

To Amy Wainwright

THIS is the time the boys come home from school,
Filling the house with gay and happy noise,
Never at rest from morn till evening cool—
All the roads of the world bring home the boys.

This is the time—but still they are not come ;
The mothers stand in the doorway listening long ;
Long, long they shall wait ere the boys come home.
Where do they tarry, the dear, the light-heart throng ?

Their feet are heavy as lead and deep their rest.
The mothers watch the road till set of sun ;
But nevermore the birds fly back to the nest.
The roads of the world run Heavenward every one.

MISSING

To Leucha Mary Warner

HE is "Missing," and forlorn
 Drag her days in grief and pain.
Every morn a hope is born,
 Only to be lost again.

"Missing!" Almost better "Killed."
 The long anguish breaks her heart
That's a dead thing, numbed and chilled
 Till the live fear bids it start.

Now a knocking at the door,
 Now a shouting in the street,
Makes her poor heart run before,
 The most bitter news to meet.

"Missing!" It may be he dies
 'Mid his foes and comfortless.
When sleep shuts her heavy eyes,
 Still she seeks him in distress.

Dear, he is not missing, not lost.

Rest your heart as on a bed.

For the One who loves him most

Knows where he has laid his head.

He accounted of all worth,

This beloved bought with a price,

Watchers look East, South, and North

From the heights of Paradise

Lest that he take any ill.

Still the Mighty Lover goes,

Seeks the beloved o'er many a hill.

Be at rest, dear child ! *He* knows !

NEW HEAVEN

To Sir William Haldane

PARADISE now has many a Knight,
Many a lordkin, many lords.
Glimmer of armour, dinted and bright,
The young Knights have put on new swords.

Some have barely the down on the lip,
Smiling yet from the new-won spurs,
Their wounds are rubies, glowing and deep,
Their scars amethyst—glorious scars.

Michael's army hath many new men,
Gravest Knights that may sit in stall,
Kings and Captains, a shining train,
But the little young Knights are dearest of all.

Paradise now is the soldiers' land,
Their own country its shining sod,
Comrades all in a merry band ;
And the young Knights' laughter pleaseth God.

RIDING HOME

Who are these that go to the high peaks and the snow ?
Side by side do they ride, their steady eyes aglow.
Gallant gentlemen, they go spurring o'er the plain ;
Home from the war again.

As they pass without a sound, there is many a red wound.
Oh, pale they are and faint they are, these warriors re-
nowned !
Yet smiling all together in the calm sweet weather,
As they ride home together.

Where the white bed is spread and the feast is set afar
And the welcome awaits and the door stands ajar,
Those who droop to the saddle-bow they shall have rest
enow,
Quiet and rest enow.

Like leaves of a wood vast their numbers as they passed,
Like winds in the pines their horses speeding fast ;
And spent with victory their haggard faces be,
As they ride fast and free.

Some will meet and greet them as they leap to the ground
With soft cries, wet eyes, and fond arms around ;
Lead them in to begin New Life, to which all loves
Home like a flock of doves.

HIS FOOTSTEP

To Lady Wemyss

THE boy will come no more
Although I listen and long ;
The sound of his foot on the floor
Was like an old song.

His foot had the music in it,
And now the music's dumb—
Like the song of the lark or linnet
Glad that Spring's come.

There's nothing stirring at all,—
'Tis quiet all by yourself,—
But a wee mouse in the wall,
The clock ticks on the shelf.

Like the song of the lark or linnet,
That's singing early and soon,
His foot had the music in it
Like an old tune.

LAMENT

To the Immortal Tenth (Irish) Division

SUVLA, name of bitterness,
Myrrh and aloes in the mouth,
Salt as Dead Sea water is !
All that splendour, all that youth,
All that nobleness ! Oh, waste
Of the dearest, loveliest !

Sands of Suvla, scarlet-dyed,
Where the Cross is down in shame
And the Crescent flaunts its pride !
Was it for this they went aflame,
The young shining sons we nursed,
For the fire and the fierce thirst ?

Suvla, that is holy ground
Sown so thick with martyr's seed :
There's no Christ now, but Mahound,
Now the Prophet and his breed
Hold the hill, *their* glorious grave,
Where they died but could not save.

Savage sun and brassy sky,
Rocks from which no waters sprung,
Was it for this we gave to die
All our beautiful, our young
Dear dead darlings sacrificed ?
Thou,—wilt *Thou* repay, Lord Christ ?

THE MOTHER OF THREE

Oh, to have a little farm,
A little hearth so warm and bright,
And three little boys all safe from harm
In from the winter night !

A little house with white-washed wall,
And thatched like any golden rick,
And the little boys within my call,
And they running so quick.

A garden and an apple tree,
And me so busy all the day,
And the little boys at home with me,
Merry out at their play.

There was a woman I've heard tell,
Whose three fine sons were killed. For sure
'Tis good to have them little and well
And just beyond your door.

This while back there is something wrong—

It may be that I miss the boys
Who filled the house the whole day long
With happy laughter and noise !

And often when I sit my lone

The sadness comes and lies on me
For the poor soul that has no son.
And me having the three !

And it's oh, to have the little farm

Under the golden thatch so bright,
And the little boys safe home from harm
Shut in with me at night !

THE FATHER

Captain Patrick Tobin, R.D.F. Suvla, August 15th, 1915

EVER his eyes are fixed on a glorious sight.

A boy is leading, calls his men to come on :
Light as a deer he leaps, slender and bright,
Up the hill, irresistible : it is won !

Ever he sees the boy against the sky,

A slender Victory, light on his golden head.
Hardly the down on his lip he hath leaped so high,
His name is writ among the undying Dead.

Captain at one-and-twenty ! Much was to come,

Great things yet to be done, heights to be scaled ;
Love and comradeship, all fruition of bloom.

He has attained to the highest. Not he who failed !

The mother weeps her boy who comes not again.

The Father sees him, splendid and laughing still,
Leaping like a young deer, calling his men.

The glory dazzles ! The boy's keeping the hill !

ALL SOULS' NIGHT

THE door of Heaven is on the latch
To-night, and many a man is fain
To steal back and keep the watch
With his Love again.

Now the children are in bed,
She hath spread the board, the fire's warm
Lest any come for heart's bread
In from the storm.

The twigs tap against the pane,
Dead leaves drift upon the door.
Oh, who comes from the night and rain
As oft before ?

His coat is damp with night-dew,
His cheek is wet against her cheek.
They kiss long as they used to do
Before they speak.

They sit down to the lit board ;
With meat and wine he shall be fed.
And there is many a sweet word
That must be said.

Many a word of comforting
Is said before the cock crow
When they shall kiss and they shall cling,
But he must go.

When all the world is fast asleep
There's light in her window-pane
Where she and her Love the watch keep
This night again.

THE GREAT SORROW

VOICE of a great wind, of wild ocean surges,
Storming the gates of Heaven,
The people of God singing under the scourges
Wherewith they are healed and shriven.

This is no sound, no wail of lamentation
Such as of old was heard
When Rachael cried to Heaven her desolation
Until all Heaven was stirred.

The people sing, crushed in the wine-press ruddy,
Broken but not dismayed,
The triumph-song of the soul over the body
Heaven-lifted, angel-stayed.

The white sorrow homes to the heavenly portal.
This grief, this grief has wings—
Blood on her breast, but through the groves immortal
Her song of triumph rings.

THE DEAR BROWN HEAD

James Cecil Johnston. Suvla. August 9th, 1915

ONLY an hour ago we were fearful for you,
Knowing the death and the darkness behind and before
you.

Years ago it might be since we were afraid.
Nothing can harm you now, O dear brown head !

You have come into port with a favouring wind ;
We are tossing yet in the seas unkind.
All around you the light and glory are shed ;
We are in darkness without you, dear brown head !

Heart and soul of a boy, simple and merry,
Never now to grow old, never be weary.
Light in the Land of the Young is your springing tread.
Long and heavy the road to you, dear brown head !

The House of God is full in the August days—
Full of the young coming home by the bitter ways.
Their beds are made near God, and the table spread,
And you lying down, sitting down with them, dear
brown head !

UNFIT

WITH younger men he takes his stand,
To the recruiting-sergeant nigh,
Sees others chosen : lifts a hand
In hopes to catch the unwilling eye,
While his mood turns to black despair
Heedless of those that grin and stare.

Careless of jibe and jeer he waits,
Thrusts himself where the eye must fall,
A voice, indifferent as Fate's,
Orders "Stand back !" and that is all.
"Too old !" He steps down to make room
For younger men more slow to come.

Too old at fifty ! But he feels
There's lots of fighting in him yet.
Some hint of glory lifts, reveals,
In the smirched days he would forget.
They might blot out the shameful past
If he fell fighting at the last.

If he could meet them, one poor rag
Of glory cast about his shame—
One rag of glory! England's flag
Wrapping in splendour his poor frame!
And all the people he once knew
Saying: "He died as white men do!"

Mirage! Such dreams as come with sleep!
And he is innocent and small,
Running through orchard grasses deep
To his dead mother's tender call;
Before he broke her heart and bowed
His father's comely head and proud.

There's nothing left to hope for more.
Poor fool, to think he might atone!
He sees in a mist a fast-shut door.
Shambling and blear-eyed and alone
He goes, and darkness covers him,
Who saw the glory and the gleam.

WHAT SHE SAID

SHE said : Would I might sleep
With the bulbs I plant so deep,
Forgetting all the long Winter
That I must awake and weep.

A dreamless sleepy-head,
Forgetting my Dear was dead ;
Nothing caring nor knowing
While the dark season sped.

I am so young, so young,
And the years stretch out so long,
The weeks and the months so endless ;
The long life does me wrong.

I would grow old and grey,
As though 'twere only a day,
Till his voice came calling, calling
To me under the clay.

Then I should spring to the sun,
Life done with, Life begun,
And run where he waited to lift me
Over the threshold stone.

She sighed in the Autumn weather :—
Would I and the bulbs together,
For Spring lay quietly waiting ;
I and the bulbs together.

THE WILD GEESE

WILD geese fly overhead
In the wild Autumn weather.
Souls of the newly-dead
Crying and flying together.

Home from the last great fight,
The souls of the Irish farin'
With a wild heart in the night,
A grey eye turned to Erin.

High and high in the sky,
From the red fields of slaughter
Ever they fly and cry
For the brown bog, the grey water.

Wild geese in the wild even,
Steady and strong their flight,
Their beds are made in Heaven,
All of the down white.

They have forgone that bliss
Till they have seen once more
The little land of peace,
Green and bright as of yore.

High o'er the sheep and cattle,
The bogs and the mountains lone,
The souls new-home from the battle
Cry their love and are flown.

THE NEW RECRUIT

THE lads were once my comrades,
They stay at home content.
And now's the time of cricket,
They count the days well spent.

They walk with girls o' Sundays,
All in their Sunday clothes ;
And of a Sunday evening
Go where good liquor flows.

Their way's no longer my way,
For I must follow now
The drum-tap and the bugle,
While they're for shop and plough.

Good-bye, good-bye, kind people,
And all I leave behind,
To girls that used to kiss me,
To one was never kind.

Good-bye, my girl unwilling,
I shall not vex you sore,
For I have taken the shilling
And I come home no more.

I heard the drums a-drumming,
And I ran out to see;
The soldiers and the fighting,
They mattered nought to me.

Good-bye, my girl that grieved me.
The bugles whistled, Come.
And I,—stepped in the roadway
And marched beside the drum.

Lord, I was proud, uplifted.
I held my head so high;
And all the girls were doating
With love as we went by!

The boys who stood and jeered me
May live to three-score-ten,
While I'm cut down at morning
Among the fighting men.

But Lord, the people shouting!
The glory tasted sweet,
And the eyes of the girls all doating
As we marched down the street.

THE ONLY SON

His mother died last year and yet
She wearied Heaven with fear and fret,
Wanting the son she left behind,
And God was patient, being kind.

He was so beautiful, so young,
Slender as a tall tree, wind-swung ;
Innocent, gay : she went in fear
Something might hurt him, lacking her.

She heard amid the starry mirth
Rumour of dreadful things on earth.
Of sweet youth slain and beauty marred
Beyond all balm and spikenard.

Oh, had she visions of his plight
Lying in the red rain at night
Amid the piteous heap of slain,
That she was wild with fear and pain ?

God gives His angels. But she went
Uncomforted and discontent.
Because no angel ever knew
The way to love that mothers do.

And so she wearied Heaven with prayer,
Her knees for ever on God's stair,
Her troubled thoughts for ever abeat
Like wings about the Mercy-Seat.

At last God heard her. Swift as the wind
His messenger went forth to find
Her son and bring him to her breast
So that at last her heart might rest.

She died a year ago and still
Her cup of Heaven's untasted till
God's messenger returns to say :
" He fell in action yesterday."

These poems have appeared in "The Windsor Magazine," "The Queen," "The Daily Chronicle," "The Nation," "The Westminster Gazette," "The Tablet," "The New Witness," to the various Editors of which I desire to make acknowledgment

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